

ray johnson

SEND LETTERS, POST CARDS,
DRAWINGS AND OBJECTS TO
MARCIA TUCKER, NEW YORK
CORRESPONDANCE SCHOOL
EXHIBITION, WHITNEY
MUSEUM, MADISON AVE.
AND 75 ST., N.Y.C. 10021

EVAPORATIONS BY RAY JOHNSON

new york correspondance school
exhibition

MAKE LOVE LETTERS NOT WAR.

MEET "DEAR RUTH"

WHOSE LOVE LETTERS SHOULD HAVE BEEN MAILED

IN ASBESTOS ENVELOPES...WHOSE SISTER GOT

HER ENGAGED TO FIVE MEN AT ONCE! BROADWAY

ROARED AT HER FOR 680 PERFORMANCES, CHICAGO

LAUGHED FOR 15 MONTHS, LOS ANGELES HUGGED HER

FOR 252 DAYS. NOW IT'S A WONDERFUL MOVIE AND

THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD CAN LOVE "RUTH", TOO.

MAKE LOVE LETTERS NOT WAR.

Ray Johnson

Drop a Line

When I met Ray Johnson in 1955, he took my address and mailed me some mimeographed sheets of cut-up phrases, mock letters, and epistulary manifestoes. When I wrote him a letter, it was returned promptly, torn up and pasted down. I was shocked and pleased at this small liberation from the conventional uses of the mails, and learned to see how his mailings called attention to the conventional processes of correspondence—envelopes, stamps, cancellations, complimentary closings—to make an unconventional point. His communications called attention to the charms and irritations of any communication, in which there are arbitrary restrictions, bourgeois interferences, and compromising self-stylizations, which limit communication even as they make it possible. Some distance is necessary for some closeness. Ray Johnson's friendships were mediated by the post office.

Everything Ray Johnson sent to me was a reference to something, a recapitulation, an illumination, and an increment. So he used *correspondence* (letter writing) as the style in which to convey a content of *correspondence* (correlation).

In the early 1960's, *correspondence* became *correspondance*, and the New York Correspondance School began in earnest. He spent hours every day mailing images to people, some labeled to be mailed to someone else. So a tissue of witty resemblances was enlarged, and a community emerged of correspondents who were willing to risk something to the mails, to send something freely to a stranger, to keep in touch by dropping a line.

This free exchange of information, images and junk parallels and parodies the commercial art market. Such an informal art exchange takes only a willingness to participate, some skill with a throw-away line, and the confidence to trust part of oneself to whisper through the immense impersonal system of the mails. The feelings accompanying this participation are like those in a play by Chekhov: the excitements of arrivals and departures, with little theatrical action, some disappointing surprises, much apparent inconsequence, and a feeling that perhaps nothing much more is possible nowadays anyway.

William S. Wilson

New York Correspondance School Contributors

Vince Aletti
George Ashley
Dana W. Atchley
Ay-O
Frederic Barthelme
Ed Baynard
Carol Berge
G. Berkowitz
Judith V. Bernstein
Bruce Birmelin
David Bourdon
Eugenia Butler
Richard C
Luis Camnitzer
Ted Carey
Monte Cazazza
George Champlin
Jean-Claude Christo
Alex Clayton
A Clean Well Lighted
Place
Michael Cooper
Fletcher Copp
Herman Costa
Vincent D'Aquila
Agnes Denes
Nancy Dickinson
L. L. Dolby
Ray Donarsky
John Evans
Charles Fahlen
C. Fairburn
Milton Feist
Niel Felts
Albert M. Fine
Allen Fish
Henry Flynt
Charles Fodor

Peter Frank
Charles & Nina Frazier
Ken Friedman
Gersh
Suzi Gablik
Edwin Golik Golikoff
Larry Hager
Lynda Hart
Marcia Herscovitz
Dick Higgins
Yatz Hjortsberg
Devi Det Hompson
Hudson Ant Farm
Peter Hujar
Ara Ignatius
Helen Jacobson
Lila Katzen
J. A. Kiefer
Alison Knowles
Sacha Kolin
Sona Komanjian
Jill Kornblee
William Landwehr
Gary Lee-Nova
Les Levine
Michael Mahoney
Tim Mancusi
Jean-Patrice Marandel
Eric Metcalfe
Gary Miller
Ian Milliss
Malcolm Morley
Michael Morris
Lowell Nesbitt
Northern California
Industrial &
Business News

New Yorker Talk of the
Town
Northwest Mounted
Valise
Yoko Ono
Philip Peppis
Lil Picard
E. M. Plunkett
Joseph Raffael
Rattner
Robbin
Linda Rosenkrantz
James Rosenquist
Richard Ross
Amalie R. Rothschild
Mickey Ruskin
R. Schmidt
Arthur Secunda
John Slorp
Normon Solomon
Harry Soviak
Toby Spiselman
Texas Special
Philip Van Brunt
John Van Riper
Edwin Varney
Nancy Warrick
Phil Weidman
George Westinghouse
Sam Wiener, Jr.
John Wilcock
John Willenbecher
May Wilson
William S. Wilson
Karl Wirsum
Charlotte Zloczower

September 2-October 6, 1970

Whitney Museum of American Art
945 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021
Telephone (212) 249-4100

Photograph: William S. Wilson

